

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A foldable stairway ladder for use in accessing items, the foldable stairway ladder comprising:
 - (a) a stairway section adapted for a user to ascend or descend;
 - 5 (b) a platform secured to the stairway section to retain the stairway section at a predetermined slope;
 - (c) a support rotatably connected to the platform; and
 - (c) a manually actuatable folding system adapted to reduce the amount of space taken up by the foldable stairway ladder.
- 10 2. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 1, wherein the folding system comprises a mechanism adapted to fold the support and the stairway section relative to each other.
3. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 2, wherein the mechanism comprises a hinge located between, and connected to, the support and the stairway section.
4. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 3, wherein the hinge comprises a pair of
15 spreaders extending between corresponding sides of the stairway section and the support.
5. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 1, further comprising at least one handrail movably secured to the stairway section at a location where a user can grasp the handrail while ascending or descending the stairway section.
6. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 5, wherein the handrail is capable of
20 moving between at least two positions.
7. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 6, wherein the two positions comprise a first, deployed position locating the handrail at a predetermined height above the stairway section, and a second, collapsed position locating the handrail at a height below the predetermined height, so that the handrail occupies less space above the stairway section
25 when in the second position.

8. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 1, wherein the stairway section and the support have respective lengths, the support movable to extend the length of support.

9. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of spring-loaded casters to enable the foldable stairway ladder to be manually rolled.

5 10. The folding system of claim 1, wherein the folding system substantially comprises mechanical components.

11. A foldable stairway ladder comprising:

 (a) a stairway section having a bottom section accessible to a user, a top section at a height above the bottom, and a pair of longitudinal sides extending between
10 the bottom and the top, the stairway section extending upwardly at a slope from the bottom to the top;

 (b) a stopping mechanism secured to the stairway section;

 (c) a platform connected to the top section of the stairway section;

 (d) a support rotatably secured to and extending downwardly from the
15 platform to support the platform when the foldable stairway ladder is in use;

 (e) at least one spreader extending between the stairway section and the support, the spreader being movable to permit the stairway section and the support to rotate relative to each other to fold and unfold the stairway ladder; and

 (f) at least one handrail secured at a corresponding longitudinal side of the
20 stairway section, the handrail extending outwardly from the stairway section by a predetermined amount so that the handrail can be grasped by a user.

12. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 11, wherein the support comprises a lower section movable to extend the length of the support.

 13. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 11, wherein the handrail includes a rail
25 and a pair of arms extending between the rail and the stairway section, the arms being rotatable between a first position corresponding to the handrail when deployed and a second position corresponding to the handrail when collapsed.

14. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 11, wherein the support further comprises an upper section with a first end secured to the platform and a second end opposite the first, wherein the lower section of the support is slidably secured to the upper section and thereby is extendible relative to the second end of the upper section to vary
5 the length of the support.

15. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 14, wherein the lower section of the support comprises a pair of members and a base, the members having first ends telescopically received within the upper section elongated and second ends secured to the base, the base adapted to engage a horizontal surface to support the platform.

10 16. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 15, further comprising a plurality of spring-loaded casters secured to the base.

17. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 11, wherein the stairway section is formed substantially of aluminum and the lower section and the spreaders are formed substantially of steel, wherein the lower section is telescopically received within the top
15 section.

18. The foldable stairway ladder of claim 11, further comprising two handrails.

19. A method of increasing space around a foldable stairway ladder when not in use, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a stairway section and a support deployable relative to the
20 stairway section to hold the stairway section at a desired angle when the foldable stairway ladder is in use, the support and the stairway section being rotatably secured relative to each other;

(b) extending a section of the support so that the support and stairway section obtain substantially equal lengths;

25 (c) unlocking a hinge extending between the support and the stairway section; and

(d) rotating the stairway section and the support relative to each other to reduce the angle therebetween to fold the foldable stairway ladder.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of folding one or more handrails rotatably connected to the stairway section from a deployed position, the
5 deployed position located at a predetermined height above the stairway section, to a folded position, the folded position located at a height below the predetermined height.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of securing the foldable stairway ladder in a substantially vertical position by a holding device.

22. A foldable stairway ladder comprising:

10 (a) a stairway section having a bottom section accessible to a user, an upper section at a height above the bottom, and a pair of longitudinal sides extending between the bottom and the top, the stairway section extending upwardly at a slope from the bottom section to the top section;

(b) a stopping mechanism secured to the stairway section;

15 (c) a platform with a first end connected to the top of the stairway section;

(d) a support rotatably secured to and extending downwardly from the platform at a second end, the support having an upper and a lower section, wherein the lower section, upper section, and platform are configured to retain the stairway section at a slope ranging between about 48 degrees and about 60 degrees, the lower section
20 secured to the upper section to be extendable relative to the upper section, the support and the stairway section having substantially the same length when the lower section is extended;

(e) a pair of spreaders extending between the stairway section and the upper section, the spreader being movable to permit the stairway section and the upper
25 section to rotate relative to each other to fold and unfold the stairway ladder;

(f) a pair of handrails secured at to the longitudinal sides of the stairway section, the pair of handrails extending outwardly from the stairway section at a predetermined height so that the handrail can be grasped by a user; and

(g) an actuatable mechanism for folding the handrail relative to the stairway section to reduce the amount the handrail extends from the stairway section.